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ABSTRACT

Predicting the federal government's role in education in the 1980s requires being aware of existing patterns and trends, noting their interaction with likely federal policy changes, and assessing the possible outcomes of this interaction. The existing patterns, or "historical givens," include trends in educational economics and demographics, in public attitudes, and in the role of state governments. Population, tax, and technological developments are reducing public schools' resources. The public expects more and more from government. Local interest groups' demands for educational reforms have increased state governments' capacity, and hence responsibility, to govern local education agencies. These existing trends will interact with new federal policies, the most likely of which is the devolution upon the states, through block grants, of existing federal power over educational resources. Three alternative outcomes may occur: the federal role in education may expand, contract, or remain the same. An expanded role would result only from a major educational crisis, which seems unlikely. A contracted role, which many think probable, would lead to a focus on educational politics at the state level. The federal role will probably remain the same, however, as the effects of past policies, existing programs, and local political groups limit the administration's options. (RW)

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Federal School Policy in the 1980s:

Historical Givens and Alternative Futures

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INTRODUCTION

In reviewing Washington's role in education policy for the 1980's, this paper opens with perception of the society that education serves. There are set out several patterns of diffusion or spread of ideas and resources throughout society. These include the movement of private resources out of the public schools, and the spread of public problems and public expectations.

The second section sets out changes in state-local control of public schooling, in the form of yet other patterns of diffusion throughout society. These include the spread of group demands for defining desirable education, a subsequent expansion of state capacities to govern education, and the consequent extension of state oversight.

Washington's role in all this is next explored with emphasis on the possibility of its devolving resources and controls to the states. This includes a review of past experience with the instrument of devolution--- block grants -- in education and other policies. That sets the background for speculation on the national role in educational policy making. Such speculation focuses on a set of single explanations and on interrelated "alternative futures." The latter presupposes futures in which Washington's role contracts, expands, or is maintained, and then explores the consequences for state and local school policy making for each future. At all points, the other papers are woven into the analysis.

We begin with a review of diffusion patterns in our society.

Changes in the Nature of the American Policy Publics

Of course, there is no "public", but a multifaceted society, facing those making educational policy. The first facet of this

"public" is its demographic change. As the papers by Piele and by Guthrie set out, these changes in brief mean that Americans will become better educated, better off, more mobile, and older (Kirst and Garms, 1981). The result is that at the end of the 1980s there will be fewer children to educate and, so, fewer school parent supporters of public education.

The Public to Private Movement

Implicit in these data is the first of the patterns of diffusion that are a given influence upon the decade ahead. This is the diffusion of private resources out of the public schools. Taxation and spending limitations, the growth of private schools, the presence of fewer children in public schools, the spread of new educational technology like micro-computers, the push toward tuition tax-credits--each has the consequence of moving resources from the public to the private sector. This diffusion funnels through society different streams of reform based on different justifications -- ideological, pragmatic, and so on. This diffusion of resources from public to private surely underlies the reduced popular support for public schools, as Piele details. But the other side of this reduced support involves Americans moving their children, money, and attitudes from the public schools.

Whether the transfer preceded or followed the support change is not an academic question, because its answer suggests likely developments which may stem or reverse this process in the next decade. Too, the role that the national economy played in this transfer process is little understood. We have no evidence on how changes in the economy affect changes in attitudes toward schools; if times are good, is the public more supportive of schools, and the reverse in bad

times? If so, then schools need only wait for the economic tide to come back in and their boat will rise with it. But this is not a well studied linkage.

Another poorly understood linkage exists between public preferences and policy changes. Do public preferences cause policy-makers to change policy, or do the latter first convince the public of the need to change policy before it does so? Recent evidence finds that opinion change does precede change in many policy areas, and the longer the opinion change is sustained, the more the evidence of policy change (Page and Shapiro, 1981). This point about the primacy of opinion in policy change has been fully developed by Peterson's paper, so that it need not be extended here. However this finding implies that reversing the non-support of public schools requires first a change in the public's evaluation of those schools. If we ask what would do that, the answer in these papers is bleak, for not much in the current educational picture, or for the decade ahead, augurs well for such change.

Two other major changes in the nature of the American population, not treated in the three papers, will affect public school policy making and, as we will see later, the role of Washington. Each change is another kind of diffusion.

The Spread of Public Problems

The first is a diffusion of public problems, including education, throughout the territory of American governments. It will remain throughout the decade as a constraint on major policy change. This diffusion of problems arises because a once-scattered population has concentrated within metropolitan areas. Despite movement to remoter areas in the 1970s, the recent census still shows about 75

percent cluster in several hundred metropolitan areas, and many of the rest live in smaller removed cities. Where the rural school had only the occasional brilliant student with educational needs, suburbs and cities now find many more and a greater need for more resources. In the 1980s, great needs arising from concentrated population will remain as persistent demands upon public schools and other governing units.

A related aspect of the diffusion of problems is that jurisdictions are not only larger now but also closer together and hence intrude more on one another. Such "jostling" generated by growing populations creates problems that overflow jurisdictional lines. These externalities are of two kinds, depending on who pays the cost of the problem, such as good teachers flocking to better paying suburbs. So population concentration interacts with the jostling of large numbers to exacerbate the distribution of problems and costs.

The Diffusion of Great Expectations

Yet behind these changes lies another in the nature of the public that is serviced by governments. That is, there is now a definition by citizens of "needs" and a greater knowledge of what is possible and desirable in meeting them. This is the diffusion of the public's policy expectations. Sometime in the 1930s, citizens shifted their expectations from the private to the public sector as a provider of services. Polls since have shown a continually expanding definition by Americans of their needs, and they also came to believe that government at all levels could and should do much to meet these newly defined needs. This perception and expectation by governors and governed have permeated educational politics at least since the late 1950s (Wirt, 1976a; Wirt and Kirst, 1982: Introduction). This attitude will continue as a given influence into the decades ahead,

whatever Washington's role will be.

Changes in the State-Local Axis of School Governance

The capacity of government to deal with these new policy demands is a remarkable testament to the flexibility of American federalism. We need to understand an alteration in federalism that involves the growth of the American state in relationship to its local units. It is not an overstatement to put it briefly: the silent coup d'etat in American federalism which threatens traditional local control has occurred not in Washington but in the state capitol (Wright, 1978; Jacob, 1976; Murphy, forthcoming; Wirt, 1976b).

While the state always has been the authoritative source of all local power, local units have actually been granted much freedom to originate and administer their own programs. For example, education has traditionally been a "state responsibility administered locally," as the aphorism put it (Collins, 1969). Until the last 20 years, this arrangement satisfactorily met the varied schooling needs and preferences of a diverse people. There was considerable variation in this localism (Wirt, 1977, Elazar, 1972), but all states authorized permissive programs for the local education authority (LEA) to use as it wished. How many state programs and personnel, how big the state's share of local school costs, how great the interest of state governors and legislatures in school policy -- all these questions produced quite limited political concern.

The Contemporary Growth of State Government

All this had changed by 1980, as authority over schooling became increasingly state oriented and administered (van Geel, 1976; Wirt, 1976b). This growth came in roughly three sequences. First was the nationwide diffusion of local group demands calling for new

definitions of good education. This appeal stemmed partly from the LEAs seeking more state monies, tax reform, or funding equity (Kirst, 1979). More significant was the proliferation of local groups, blocked by LEAs, who turned to the state and national governments for assistance. Racial, professional, and lay school constituents became politicized in a fashion detailed elsewhere (Wirt, 1976a; Wirt and Kirst, 1982: Introduction). All were alike in several respects. Each group found itself balked locally, as each challenged the traditional authority of the professional to define the quality, quantity, and effectiveness of service -- part of an international movement against professionals (Wirt, 1981a; Coombs and Merritt, 1977). Too, each group turned elsewhere, and each did so by rallying public opinion. All at once, it seemed, education was no longer noncontroversial and nonpolitical.

The state government was the chief target of this challenge because it was most easily reached by group tactics and publicity, it could better provide funds for emergent needs, and, ultimately, it had the prime authority to change matters locally. In the process, state governors, legislators, judges, and bureaucrats found themselves involved regularly in settling these disputes (Campbell and Mazzoni, 1976). By 1980, the taxpayer revolt and the bite of inflation had brought the state directly into the most powerful local policy of all -- money for schooling. No longer perceived as the sancrosanct subject uninvolved in the cut-and-thrust of budget politics, school finances were minutely subject to state controls not known earlier.

This movement produced a diffusion of state capacities to govern education. Each branch of state government became strengthened in different ways (Patterson, 1976; Murphy forthcoming). Legislative

committees became staffed for policy analysis and other functions. The legislative education staff grew in 40 of the states during the 1970s (Katz, 1978: p. 35), a capacity increasingly adding social science knowledge to political knowledge (Mitchell, 1981). The result was that school interest groups could turn to a body ready and willing to act.

The executive also grew in knowledge of education policy. Governors took on policy analysts, increasingly important for the annual state budget contest. Chief state school officers became the key administrators of policy innovations, state school boards became more involved in conflicts among constituents, and the state education agencies often saw themselves translating into guidelines the mandates of legislature. As a result, the staffs of all these branches grew in number, training, and importance in the outcome of education politics (Campbell-Mazzoni, 1976; Murphy, 1974; Fuller and Pearson, 1969). As noted later, the states' highest courts also had to deal with technical questions of educational policy, exemplified in the California and New Jersey Supreme Court's role in school finance reform (Lehne, 1978).

This diffusion of state capacity indistinguishably was transformed into <u>the diffusion of state oversight</u>. Guidelines and mandates by statutory and administrative statements were only the most obvious signs of this change. Imposed on the LEA also were more reporting requirements, programs for training local personnel in policy innovations, and provision of state expertise for collective bargaining, compensatory and handicapped education, sex or race discrimination, and so on. As a result, even before the 1970s, LEAs had far less control than the myth proclaimed (Peterson, 1974).

A review in the early 1970s found that all states totally controlled LEAs on a few policies, had a dominant role in many more, and limited influence on only a handful (Wirt, 1978). By 1980 the anecdotal evidence was overwhelming from school boards and superintendents that the state was the bigger partner in decision making, often leaving them little options.

The set of diffusions sketched to this point suggests three political commonalities within the federalism of education. First, until recent years, school policy had been the domain of the professionals, forming a Low Conflict politics. In this, the true stimuli of school law were professional interest groups, primarily administrators backed by school boards (Masters, Salisbury, and Eliot, 1964; Bailey, et al., 1962). State, government and political parties acquiesced because they had little to gain by participating, especially in challenging the unicorn image of the professionals. So initiation, alternative, formulation, authorization, and implementation of policy were primarily in professional hands. It was a game played by few, with rules set only by the players.

A second and more recent commonality has been the dramatic appearance of a High Conflict politics. Disaggregated groups generated new demands which stimulated state agencies, political parties, and local groups to perceive school policy making as highly political. Once-acquiescent state officials were drawn into the fray, if for no other reasons than to deal with inflation and tax revolts (Murphy, forthcoming). By 1981, they regard education as simply one of numerous policies to be held accountable on tighter funds to match the efficiency mood of the 1970s (Katz, 1978).

A third political commonality evident in this picture is the challenge to the traditional autonomy of professionals in deciding how policy should be made, policy services delivered, and schooling financed and in what amounts. This development was a part of a larger challenge to all professions recently (Wirt, 1981). This means a larger role for the laity -- although still only a fraction get involved (Piele and Hall, 1973; Salisbury, 1980). But there were also divisions among school professionals themselves, symbolized by the splintering of the "umbrella" organization of the National Education Association. Professional educational specialists in their group clusters today look like the "big bang" theory of cosmic formation. Clusters of elements float away from their once interlocking unity, their gravitic bonds ever weakening, all moved by the explosiveness of the challenge to professional autonomy.

We have only sketched these diffusions of political ideas and practices, but they will continue to act in the decade ahead as the major context of educational policy making, whatever Washington does. There are certain elements in these diffusions which need highlighting for their influences upon Washington's role. These are developed next as a transition to understanding that role.

The Escalation of Local Demands in Educational Politics

The proliferation of group actors, resources, and policy demands expanded the educational policy world known by the traditional education lobbies, the "general focus" groups of teachers, administrator, and school boards (Kirst and Sommers, 1981). They had once been concerned with a wide range of issues and levels of policy making. As they were decentralized their costs for organization were high and their cohesion around specific goals low (Olson, 1971). The

proliferating "special focus" educational groups of recent years have been smaller, hence easier to obtain greater effectiveness and to outmaneuver the larger but decentralized associations. Some are functional, concerned with but a single issue such as special or bilingual education. While others are geographically oriented to a few issues such as big-city school districts or ethnic neighborhoods. both special focus types have been increasingly influential in state and local politics because of their large knowledge of one issue, their ability to focus their resources upon different policy making stages, and their intensity of feeling about one goal. They typify an interest group politics in America where numbers count less than the ability to deliver available resources upon vulnerable political targets.

In High Conflict school politics, amid shelling of the schools from 360°, there has been lost any sense of general welfare for the children. Partisans are now more interested in "my children" rather than "the children." Professional educators once claimed the interests of the latter, but now, amid a bargaining, brokered, pluralistic policy process, they are more involved in surviving than in grander tasks (e.g., see Wall Street Journal, 1981). This clash of partisans does not mean there is no longer a role for professionals. They will still be needed to provide expertise where it can illuminate, unlike their former political role of dictating without persuading, overpowering by status rather than educating by reason.

The point about the escalation of group demands is that there is no reason why this process should stop at the local level. There is little historical evidence that major changes in the form and functions of American federalism revert over time to earlier ways.

Rather, the historical picture is one of experimentation, with accompanying rejection of some and acceptance of other ways. Such experimentation can take lateral, cooperative forms, as in the recent emergence of "education service agencies" (AAESA, n.d.) The most popular form is a cooperative consortium of LEAs with multiple, limited, or single purposes. Such cooperation, say for vocational or handicapped education, demonstrates the tenacity of confederacy in our history (Wirt, 1981b).

A more common experimentation has been appealing to the state for help, but it should not be viewed as something special to education. Rather, it is the latest in an historical pattern of demands found in many policy fields rising to the level of government that can satisfy them (Shields, 1952). The four areas of largest state spending in recent decades -- education, welfare, health, and roads -- were each in its origins handled privately and locally. But each in different periods became matters for local governments because private sources were insufficient. And in time, the state was beseiged for assistance as local coffers became drained, and then in turn, the national government became the target of appeal. At each stage, Americans showed no steadfast preference for localist principles if they did not meet needs. Too, at each stage the higher source appealed to also imposed conditions for its help.

Yet it is not a picture of unresolved dominance of local citizens and officials. The latter have developed ways of diverting and diluting the external thrust upon them. The first rule of intergovernmental politics is: Maximize external funding and minimize external control (Wright, 1978). Each lower level would like the higher level to put the money on a stump quietly (say about midnight),

then turn and march away smartly, while the locals grab the money and run off in the darkness. This behavior is not neat and orderly, but competitive (even destructive) and sometimes irresponsible (even corrupt). But how else could officials act in a system with multiple jurisdictions of multiple views of the good society?

This analysis leads to the conclusion that the interactions of local units with other levels in education cannot be frozen into a pattern of either total local or total national control. Some people fear or hope for one or the other outcome, but the reality is more fluid, dynamic, and messy. Federalism is not written on tablets of granite. Against that background, we cannot expect a permanent solution to the question of who will govern in a multi-level society.

The Spread of State Capacity for Educational Governance

The diffusion of the state capacity for governance has been stimulated by the diffusion of policy problems and the public's policy expectations. What influences operate on this capacity that will make it either temporary or permanent?

This state capacity is partly traceable to the growth of interjurisdictional conflicts which require an external umpire. Thus, the recent growth of air and water pollution has led to regional and state controls against a city's irresponsibility to its neighbors. Too, trans-jurisdictional problems contribute to state capacity for governance, for problems which exceed the capacity and will of the LEA necessitate external resources. Hence the state role in providing special education for the blind, deaf, and dumb or for big-city schools' special problems.

Other reasons for growth in state capacity lie outside the state itself. Thus much of this growth stems from judicially inspired reallocations of political power. The shifting of electoral power from the farm to the city and now to the suburb is a result of a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 1962 over apportionment (Baker v. Carr). A rural district's educational needs could once be met locally or by limited private means in its scattered population. But the needs of other school districts in and around the city were unimportant to farmers who ruled the legislature, so the state need not know much about special education problems of city people. However, judicial innovation led to more state activity in new kinds of school policy responsive to newly empowered suburban and city districts. That new state role required new state personnel to propose, evaluate, finance, and implement new state laws responsible to the mysteries of ethnic, special, and other education which emerged in the 1970s.

Another external influence upon state capacity has been the national connection for strengthening education. The Washington story is one of national largesse which assigned, or invited, new state policy and new state professionals for the governance of education. The growth of the SEAs and CSSOs noted earlier is traceable in good part to this largesse, although these agencies did not always meet Washington's policy goals (Murphy, 1974). Quite often Washington worked collaboratively with the new special focus groups to generate totally new kinds of educational responsibilities for state, as well as local, schooling authorities (Murphy, forthcoming). As Guthrie's paper sets out clearly, this new interest politics, whether in the legislative or executive branches in Washington,

ended with major new tasks which the states were induced or compelled to share.

Too little noted in research but familiar to participants has been the role of the academy in suggesting these new tasks. New scholarly advocates of school reform could provide expertise for a range of issues and participants in response to state or local authorities. There are well developed networks of reform (Kirst, 1980) generated by scholars who themselves participate in the policy process. This politicization of academia has been traditional in many policy areas outside education, e.g., agriculture, social work, medicine, and law. The participation of scholars has not been without its costs. There is serious question if scholarly methods can be properly used in the policy process without suborning the former and confusing the latter (Wirt, 1980; Meltsner, 1976). Some doubt has been cast on the ability of academicians to influence the source of national policy events. (Aaron, 1978). But it certainly brought the social sciences more directly into education policy making and administration (Immegart and Boyd, 1979) and probably helped shape the training of the next generation of education professionals (e.g., Sergiovanni et al., 1980).

Whatever the sources of this diffusion of state capacity, it will likely be a continuing element of the educational world. That stems from the continuing nature of its causes -- inter-LEA conflicts, trans-LEA problems, the mosaic of demands from suburbs and cities, and scholarly advocacy. The devolution of control sought by the Reagan administration in the form of block grants will further foster this capacity. For if the state receives such grants, it means also it will acquire more resources to maintain or expand its

own capacity to govern education, an implication treated later. Thus this given of state capacity will remain during the 1980s, no matter the federal role.

The Reach of State Control over Local Schooling

The growth of state oversight over education is the end result of all these diffusions. In the end, the enemy of local autonomy was not so much Washington as one's own state and the interaction of both units. The long-held fear of centralization, which arose from American love of freedom, proved ultimately to be correct. For the freedom of citizens to shape the education they think appropriate for their locale has been powerfully constrained by central authority. But these mandates came far more from the state house than the White House.

State oversight grew for enough reasons to belie any single explanation. There was the growth in pressures from ever more school interest groups to ensure their compliance (Murphy, forthcoming). There was the LEA resistance to state requirements which often evoked sterner state enforcement. There was the gradual vesting in state bureaucracies of the need to justify their existence through oversight. There was the nudge from Washington to ensure that national goals did not disappear in the potential of federalism to muffle them. There was the "picket-fence federalism" of intergovernmental relations (Wright, 1978), in which public and private partners sharing one new policy interest -- special, handicapped, ethnic education -- worked across the boundaries of federalism, as Peterson notes that vocational education had done for seventy years.

Again, looking ahead, these state oversight needs, resources, and mechanisms will not be lightly cast aside in the decade ahead.

Even the most conservative administration, passionately intent on devolution, can do little to overturn this state control of LEAs. Indeed, it prefers such control. State legislators will be unlikely to abandon their concerns for equity or efficiency if Washington encourages them by providing block grants. Governors, worrying about tight tax dollars, will be unwilling to let LEAs flout state law if it costs money. Too, by 1980 the CSSOs, SEAs, and state school boards had inherited large responsibilities for the specifics of education which have political constituents intent on holding them to it. Even if state officials desired to avoid these responsibilities, the newly activist courts in educational policy will give them pause for the special focus groups see the courts as simply an alternative arena for decision making.

The preceding picture of continuing state centralization assumes that state lawmakers will not themselves play the devolution game. We will later explore the possibility of that state legislatures may use block grants, without strings but at lower funding levels, to escape their own budgetary binds. However, in the 1980s, this historical given of state control provides a momentum that is unlikely to alter much.

Washington's Impact on the State Education Policy System in the 1980s

Would Washington's doing less in the 1980s, as present signals indicate, change the preceding pattern of state-local interaction in any significant way?

The Forces of Inertia

This paper has sketched the development in recent years of a state educational policy system characterized by high conflict,

proliferated pressures, challenged professionals, diverse state policy ventures, extensive state oversight, and so on. The point of that presentation is that this is now a "system" which has been "institutionalized," with all the inertia those terms imply. Note that we have no record of states ever returning authority to local units in other policy areas, once entrenched. That suggests something important about the forces of inertia in policy development, several of which can be made explicit.

First, educational demands from local groups will remain as long as their needs are unmet, as they have not at this writing. Why should those demanding a stronger state and national role in meeting the needs of compensatory, bilingual, and handicapped education or of curriculum protection permit such matters to return to local hands? After all, it was just such unloving hands which generated the demands in the first place for external governments to provide equity. Too, how else can those seeking efficiency find it but from external sources, imposing and overseeing that standard against local inefficiencies in finances and practices which generated their original protest? In short, the problems of local education do not go away, and their group cohorts disband, just because someone waves the banner of state rights, home rule, or other devolution principles.

A second way in which inertia will exert influence arises in considering Washington's devolution of educational controls and funds via block grants. A strong case can be made that this would most likely increase pressures upon the state to become more involved in LEA governance, because the state must then decide how to use its own block grants. This likelihood requires somewhat more

elaboration.

Federal Devolution and State Power

Recent independent reviews conclude that federal devolution would bring state legislatures even more control over LEAs, by setting formulas for the distribution of federal funds under pressure from local constituents, either geographic or functional (Lehne and Rosenthal, 1980; Shive and Thompson, 1981; Murphy, forthcoming). The state legislature becoming the central arena would also increase pressure on national lobbies to redirect their resources to the state level, seeking to recapture what had been lost in Washington. Attendant on this move would be greater publicity about state educational policy making, as pressure groups seek to cultivate public opinion. Whether state legislative politics has been characterized by single-group dominance or the scramble of many groups (Zeigler, 1976), the competition would have to increase among school lobbies over the reduced funds from Washington.

Moreover, fund consolidation would change the structure of the group interaction from distributive to redistributive politics (Shive and Thompson, 1981). That is, when the pie is smaller and non-additive, what one school group wins -- say, the handicapped -- will come at the expense of another -- say, compensatory education. Zero-sum games among multiple players militate against the rise of strong leadership and group compromises. But the inability of groups to focus policy effort does not mean that the legislature or governor cannot do so. National devolution that generates a redistributive politics would most likely motivate teacher groups to focus on the state legislature. Their thinking would be that to protect members

in local situations, where their power might be diluted by the cross-pressures of multiple groups, it would be better to seek decisions on "bread and butter" issues from the state level. Implicit here is the growing potential that statewide salary and working conditions could be generated by such pressures -- including strikes.

Not even the courts escape the consequences of the lobbying politics of block grants. For if a law creates entitlements for one group, and the state or federal governments fail to provide funding sufficient to meet the obligation, the scene is set for litigation over conflicting laws. For example, if Washington abolishes funding P.S. 94-142 or ESEA Title I, afflicted groups can claim that failure to provide such services violates the equal protection of the laws clause of the 14th Amendment and the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The combination of these adjustments to national devolution augur for an unusually active politics of education in the 1980s centered around the state authorities. More, unless states totally avoid all effort to put strings on the money that Washington devolves to them -- playing a simple game of "pass-through" politics -- the imposition of guidelines on the uses of these moneys will bring even more state control. Each state will be a cockpit for the resolution of this devolution, in which contrasting political cultures will differentiate the results (Wirt, 1977). That is, the more centralized states will remain so, while the new freedom offered by national devolution will energize the more localist states to let LEAs decide their own school policies.

Past Experience with Block Grants

If this seems a bit too speculative, notice that there is supportive evidence drawn from what happens under other kinds of

block grants. A recent Rand study (McDonnell and McLaughlin, 1980) explored what happened with a new ESEA Title IV, the first consolidation of federal education programs. One block grant combined the old Title II (school library resources, textbooks and instructional materials) and Title III (testing, counseling, and guidance) with the old Title III of NDEA (strengthening instruction in academic subjects). Another consolidation brought together old ESEA Title III (supplementary centers and innovative projects) and Title V (strengthening SEAs and LEAs' leadership resources) with two sections of ESEA (dropout prevention and health-nutrition projects). With surveys of federal and state officials in all the states and of public and nonpublic officials in about 600 LEAs, and with fieldwork in eight state departments of education and 24 school districts, what was found about this pioneering devolution of school policy?

The new Title IV was widely praised for its flexibility and easy administration. Small grants induced large improvements in LEA practices, although varying widely in their subjects, administration, and worth. But "Title IV did not result in a consolidated management of the former categorical programs" (McDonnell and McLaughlin, 1980: vi). The money for local programs was generally used as supplementary funds for ongoing activities, although a few could focus such monies successfully. But with local budgets shrinking, these funds were vital for maintaining library and other programs.

The money going to SEAs caused them to devise different funding strategies for innovations, e.g., competitive grants vs. money for every LEA. This stemmed not from fund consolidation, but from greater information now available to SEAs about district needs and methods of meeting them. In short, the states now know better

how to allocate money and programs to meet local LEA priorities. But about a third of this state money was set aside to meet state priorities in educational innovation. Too, funds to strengthen the SEA's leadership potential were used to supplement only some, not all, national aims, e.g., fiscal accountability and data systems rather than training and dissemination.

What were the consequences for the intergovernmental relations in which such power operates? Variations existed among the states in how they acted toward Washington and the districts. That is, "The way a SEA is organized and its customary way of dealing with local districts largely determine whether the state acts as a passive funding conduit, concerned only with compliance, or whether it actively shapes federal programs to promote the state priorities" (McDonnell and McLaughlin, 1980: ix). That is, the "political culture" (specifically labeled by this report) was an intervening variable between state and LEA. This diverse reaction is reminiscent of the finding early in the 1970s that non-targetted federal monies going into the states were refracted by each state's characteristic way of alloting money among rural, suburban, and central city districts (Berke and Kirst, 1972). It parallels also the finding elsewhere that such cultures modify state control over money to LEAs (Wirt, 1980). This Title IV experiment may not be a full test of what to expect in the future, because it mixed quite different program components. While merging programs into a structurally neater arrangement, LEA or SEA discretion may be greater with this program than in the Reagan administration proposals.

There is evidence of block grant results in other than

education. A recent review of five block grants (health, law enforcement, manpower training, community development, social services) and of their implementation found that they "have suffered much the same political pressures and have operated in very similar ways" (Hastings, 1981: 4) as categorical grants. Whatever the proponents' expectations about devolving authority the better to target programs for improving plans for meeting local problems, the experience was disappointing. Some LEAs used the monies for purposes intended by Congress, but others did not. Some supporters thought that aggregating categorical programs into block grants would also aggregate their supporters into a broader pressure group, which would then obtain larger appropriations. But that emphatically has not been the result, for these block grants' percentage of the total national budget has stabilized or dropped, not increased. Working against such aggregation have been strong group pressures for new categorical grants to be attached to the block grant, which Congress has been willing to do.

Other supporters have argued that block grants would shift education control from program specialists to elected official and thus produce greater political accountability. However, the record of each block grant is mixed. The shift occurred more for community development but less for other policies. For example, the requirement for citizen advisory panels mobilized not the poor and underrepresented but those already active in the program -- and very often not poor. Too, supporters had urged block grants to make the service more efficient, by minimizing federal personnel, reducing paperwork and red tape, improving reporting, and eliminating duplication. Again, the actual record here is mixed. While the total federal personnel dropped, the total of state and local administrators rose, often

paid federally. Some block grants did reduce paper work, but not in community development. Congress has kept adding newer controls to prevent purported misuse of money, which means more paperwork by someone.

In short, this review (Hastings, 1981) found that devolved discretion to the states often put them in the same controlling relationship to the local system as Washington had been to local governments. More, program effectiveness was not particularly improved, certainly not if planning of goals and resources was sought for a more rational treatment of problems.

The recent history of general revenue sharing has shown such funds are widely used not for services but for tax relief, thus a middle-class boon based on programs ostensibly designed for social services. A recent study (Shapiro, 1980) of GRS and community development block grants found that they tend to substitute for locally raised taxes, while categorical grants have an additive effect on expenditures. The latter results in about $1.07 being spent for the target group for every $1.00 provided, while block grants provide only about 50¢, with the rest substituted for tax increase or maintenance. Henry Levin's current research at Stanford finds much the same differential results from state expenditure for education, and the National Urban League has just reported the same for poverty programs (San Francisco Chronicle, 1981).

These reviews suggest strongly that national and state policy goals are ignored by lower levels when their funding rests on block grants, without strings. LEAs do it to states, and states do it to Washington, in keeping with the prime directive of federalism -- maximize external funding but minimize external controls. So,

were Washington to withdraw all strings in a "pure" block grant (difficult to imagine), unless all that money is passed through directly to the LEAs for their use, the states can easily step in to take the directive role so objected to when Washington played it. From the perspective of the LEA, would it be any different to substitute the SEA for a Washington agency?

Certainly the LEA could mobilize the forces of localism which give it some clout at the state capitol. Representatives to the state legislature, local members of state pressure groups, the strategy of litigation, the sensitivities by many SEAs to local concerns (varying widely among the 50 states) -- all these are centrifugal forces working against state control. We know little about these influences on a systematic base, because so little is known comparatively about state-local interactions over school policy. We should learn much from the current interaction studies by the School Finance Project of NIE.

But recall that localism has not been effective in the past in blocking the drift to state control set out earlier in this paper. So why would it change when more decisional authority and more money would be placed in state hands by federal block grants? Too, across the nation, localism has been declining. The territorial mobility of Americans has worked against the old attachments to locale, and their mixing in the cities, suburbs, and regions does not build new local cultures. Too, the decline in support for the public schools which Piele has detailed has two unsuspected implications for this state-local interaction. If people are "exiting" those schools, rather than staying to seek a "voice" in them, they no longer can pressure the LEA to support their preferences against external mandates to the

contrary. And, those who remain to use their "voice" strategy -- minorities and poor -- are exactly those who have been benefitted by the intervention of states and Washington to improve their educational resources.

There remains an alternative strategy to foster local control. Both Washington and the state capitol can devolve their aid via blocks grants directly to the LEAs. Note that this has indeed begun in a few places. For its current budget year, the Michigan legislature cut 14 percent of its general aid and two-thirds of its categorical aid. It is an attractive solution to state lawmakers who want to escape the cross-pressures of modern educational politics generated by categorical program constituents (Murphy forthcoming). It emulates a popular president's philosophy on national devolution. It echoes the currently fashionable conservative ideology about maximizing local decisional centers in life in order to improve efficiency in meeting diverse needs. And it is cheaper in an era of tight budgets.

However, it may not be attractive to all states and regions, depending upon their fiscal stress. After all, Michigan may be the most distressed state in the nation currently because of inflation and the auto industry decline; its legislators can abandon all responsibility for state leadership in educational problems but gain a tighter budget and lesser pressure. However, in more prosperous states, such as in the Sunbelt, the trade-offs may not seem as clear-cut and state control there has traditionally been high. Florida's governor recently asked that the state share of local costs be raised from 65 to 70 percent.

Nevertheless, this policy approach does not totally escape

pressures from education groups. The special focus or geographical groups will fear their interests will be lost when it resurfaces among the myriad LEAs, with no state mandate backing it. The broad-based, traditional school lobbies seem to have been neutral about the change. They know they will be getting more freedom to use state monies, but the trade-off is less money and a redistributional fight over every local, annual budget.

None of these current policy discussions is satisfactory when viewing the prospects of an entire decade. The reason is that much speculation assumes that the current conditions will remain for some time. But as all these papers ask, what if the economy improves slowly or even abruptly? Or as Peterson asks, what if popular dissatisfaction with the current administration returns Democrats to control of Congress in 1982, or of the White House in 1984 or 1988? As Piele asks, what if popular support of schools begins to rise, having bottomed out at the start of the decade? As this paper asks, what if private school outlets become closed off as their basic uneconomical condition makes it impossible to raise the capital funds needed for more buildings to house more students? Or, as Peterson asks, what if courts validate some form of nonpublic school aid? Or as this paper asks, what if the courts agree that programs once legislated cannot be abandoned in appropriations, that entitlements must be funded while still on the statute books? As Guthrie and Piele ask, what will the baby boomlet of children entering schools in the mid-1980s do to increase school resources and parental concern for good education? The next section suggests how we might begin thinking about these possibilities.

These queries could become individual speculations about the future of Washington's educational policy role, but that would ignore interactive effects of these factors. What the following suggests is the construction of alternative futures emphasizing the interplay of factors which are not likely to change. We have emphasized the development of certain "givens," the massive structure of state control and the complex matrix of pressure groups around American school policy. But what can be said about the changing forces that might operate during this decade? What follows is an effort to reduce the seemingly infinite possibilities that alternative futures might take. By no means is it implied that there is "a" future bound to come out of such thinking; that is why "alternative futures" will be used. At least we can begin to narrow the future to the possible, if not the probable.

Partial Analysis of Alternative Futures

The central research task motivating the School Finance Project's efforts is to estimate which developing political and other trends will influence Washington's role in educational policy making in this decade. What Washington does during the 1980s will obviously have to be the result of a combination of private and political conditions. Such speculation about what may happen is termed here "partial analysis."

Private Sector Influences on Washington's Role

The state of the economy might seem crucial to Washington's role, as Peterson sets out, but it can be argued different ways. Thus, in the depression of the 1930s, Washington did little if anything with education, but in the depression of the late 1970s it expanded national school programs under Carter and is seeking

to constrict them under Reagan. Under Peterson's four futures, Washington's role in education seems independent of the state of the economy. If Democrats win, whether the economy strengthens or not we can expect a stronger national role because education lobbies are a natural constituent of that party. Reverse conditions would prevail if the GOP continues in power, regardless of the economy. In short, party ideology differences are the missing key; presidents can ignore economic conditions to treat education as their ideology requires.

Second, public support for schools could be a private sector stimulant to Washington's role. But it is not determinant either, because it is divided on the value of schools (Kirst, 1981) and unclear on the Washington connection. Piele's judgment that public support is unrelated to Washington's role is ultimately convincing, for Americans' perception of political issues and of levels of government is limited. Perceiving, understanding, evaluating, and acting on Washington's role -- all essential links if public and government are interactive -- are not widespread. True, a pervasive, continuing public support for policy has been found to be a precondition of major policy change in Washington (Page and Shapiro, 1981). But that precondition for a new Washington role cannot be found in the Piele data, no matter how hard one looks.

A third private sector factor is the capacity of the private schools to absorb parents exercising their exit option from public schools and seeking to influence Washington's education policy role. It is this option which has caused some to see a massive withdrawal from public schools. But this speculation ignores the fact that

Roman Catholic schools, accounting for 76 percent of all church-related enrollment in 1978, have themselves declined in the number of schools and students every single year since the early 1960s (NCES, 1980: 45, 47).

Moreover, this purported change in the demand of parents for public schooling seems the resultant of several population streams, and not simply of those rejecting public schools. First, there are those whose children have left school, an aging proportion bound to loom larger in decades ahead. Second, there are those seeking religious education for traditional reasons of theology and discipline. Third, there are those fleeing public schools for fear of racial minorities. Fourth, there are those exiting public schools out of dislike of too-undemanding instruction. Only the last two fit the thesis of rejection of public schools for the private.

But this listing is misleading as to the volume of such exiting. Actually, the number of children withdrawn from public schools for any reason is not great. In every census from 1870 to 1970, except those following World War II, the proportion of the schoolable young (5-17) actually in public schools has increased regularly (now 89 percent). Too, the proportion of all 14-17 year olds in high school has also increased regularly since 1890 -- and did so in every year measured during the 1970s, totalling over 85 percent in 1978 (NCES, 1980: 36, 44). Even in Mississippi, the flight to the "Bible Academies," an exit protest against desegregation, levelled off at about 5 percent during the 1970s (Orfield, 1978). So the future does not involve a massive torrent of exit but only a trickle, hence a limited influence upon public schools or Washington.

Public Sector Influences on Washington's Role

Partial analysis of futures can be based on public, as well as private, sector forces. First, the degree of state centralization could be impacted by special focus groups -- functional or territorial -- in one of two ways. They could continue strong by focusing upon state allocations if Washington devolves controls and funds there. Or, they could weaken if Washington and the states put all such decisions in the hands of one or a consortia of LEAs (Murphy, forthcoming). The possibility of more state money and control would provide these pressure groups with a single target against which to mobilize their resources, while devolving to the LEA would dissipate their efforts among multiple targets.

Equally strong projections can be made for either eventuality by knowledgeable observers of educational politics. If Washington's funds are devolved as block grants, states would be under great pressure from LEAs, and the traditional school lobbies to remove strings and categorical programs. This would deal a severe blow to special focus groups rooted in categorical programs. But the latter can generate much pressure on Washington to maintain special programs, as has happened with block grant efforts in other policy areas. Even now, the success of compensatory, bilingual, and Headstart programs in not being abolished suggests that the scenario of large block grants wiping out categorical pressure groups will not come to pass in any major form.

A second public sector influence -- the judiciary -- is even more problematic if we examine only the U.S. Supreme Court. There is the great likelihood of its changed composition in a few years and

of the opportunity for President Reagan to appoint conservatives (one was nominated during this writing). But what that means is unclear, for history has shown that presidents regularly lose grip over their candidates, once sworn in. Nor is defining them as "strict constructionists" of much help, for judges are regularly called on to decide between conflicting constructions of the Constitution. Too, judges tend to be more "strict" on some issues than on others. In the following analysis, this is the one political factor least amenable to speculation. But on one issue -- desegregation -- the Court has wavered, although still critical of demonstrable discrimination.

What, then, of the public sector influences on the future of the Congress and Presidency? For at least the first part of this decade, it is clear, a conservative orientation will lay over these two offices. One thing this means is less money from Washington. Both parties are seized by this retrenchment mood, President Reagan has made it a pledge in his campaign, and he sought (successfully so far) to implement it within his first year in office. Still unclear is whether the other side of that coin -- reduced controls for school programs via block grants -- will take place. Compensatory aid, impacted aid, bilingual education, Headstart -- all seem so far to have been held immune from the current budget-cutting. The combination of pressure groups that Guthrie sets out and Peterson details provides a bastion of defense in at least the House of Representatives, but how long that can stand against a bipartisan conservative coalition now forming in Congress is most uncertain.

Finally, the president during Guthrie's "Federal Era" has

been the pivotal figure in promoting or reducing national educational programs. Each man has shown different interest in different matters (none has been enthusiastic about desegregation, of course). Each assembles an agenda of governance issues with different ranking of the items. Reagan has clearly put education quite low, picking a Secretary to preside over the dissolution of the Washington empire of education. Yet again, another president may well give higher priority to that empire's maintenance, as Peterson's scenarios of Democratic ascendance show. Given American's recent penchant for tiring of presidents after one term, another president could be on the scene in 1984, and certainly will in 1988. His different priority for education will depend on his party and its ideology, more than anything else.

If all these partial explanations add up to confusion, they should. This exercise in speculation was designed to show how focusing upon singular explanations, coming from different voices, fuzzies perception of the future. Can we do better, though, possibly by reducing our list of contextual factors to the more probable factors which will influence education in the 1980s?

Structured Thinking about Alternative Futures

We can do this by recalling that the culminating purpose of the commissioned papers was to provide, beside political history, "speculation on the ways in which ... the 1980s will differ from the previous two decades in terms of political forces and the response of the intergovernmental system to these forces," and a "description of the anticipated effects on the federal role in education of the political changes prophesized for the 1980s." Upon reflection, it

is obvious that there are only three possible Washington roles in the future. Either that role will increase significantly, decrease significantly, or remain much as it was over the last two decades.

It should be possible to paint with broad strokes the dimensions of these alternative futures of expansion, contraction, and maintenance, and to speculate on the effects of each on Washington's role in education. In each alternative future, however, the same set of contextual factors just analyzed will be applied, but with different emphasis.

The Expansive Alternative Future

Central to any significant expansion by Washington would be a crisis in education that local and state forces could not handle. Historically, crisis has been the stimulus for all of Washington's entering or expanding policies in other areas. Two conditions must operate for this future to be realized: a crisis must exist, but the capacity to meet it by state-local systems of education does not. In the past, this combination has brought state-local officials and concerned constituents beating on the doors of Congress for relief. The explosive power of the post-war baby boom created just such a crisis for education two decades ago (preceded by a minicrisis over Sputnik which produced the NDEA), from which flowed the spate of special-focus, national legislation after 1965, set out by Guthrie and Peterson.

What crisis could constitute a similar spur in the 1980s? Inflation seems a likely candidate, for it could mean that financially strapped LEAs and states might turn to Washington to increase its share of their school costs. But no such pressure has appeared to

date, despite the worst recession since the 1930s. Certainly the Reagan administration's thrust to reduce national expenditures-- including education-- is no inducement to such future pressure. There will clearly be no repetition of the baby boom to generate a crisis, although the baby boomlet of the mid-1980s and thereafter will generate some local crises. Too, as Guthrie noted, improvement in the national economy (with regional variations) would enable LEAs to raise sufficient money without increasing their tax rates to meet local demands.

There is a "worst case" crisis of the direst sort that could expand Washington's role -- a near total collapse of local public school systems, particularly in center cities of the Northeast. Boston comes closest to this example today in a federal judge's control over many aspects of administration and finances in an effort to desegregate (Buell, 1981). After all, Washington has propped up collapsing institutions in the past. It did this for business, from Wall Street panics of the last century to Chrysler quite recently. It has done so for agriculture in the Great Depression, and for railroads and highways in the last quarter century.

The possibility is not far-fetched for education in the future. Some Northeastern big-city school systems are currently straining the capacity of not only their local revenue sources, but those of their states. Declining tax bases, fiscal mismanagement, desegregation, and other events suggest this possibility of institutional incapacity as the crisis that would expand Washington's role. While shocking to contemplate, one can see big-city school officials turning to Congress for more money, even if it meant more control.

Just that has happened when states were recently appealed to for bail-out funds in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Boston. But such a crisis would not be nationwide, affecting rather only one major region, and not all the schools even there.

The growing concerns over schools' "failures" in teaching our young could generate a crisis. Combined here are the complaints about not teaching literacy, science, and mathematics, or languages well. In the past, Washington has funded comprehensive national programs to improve instruction and curriculum (MACOS, New Math), as well as categorical grants to states for other innovations. A heated politicization of curriculum decision making has drawn in laity, professionals, publishers, schools of education, and all levels of government (Boyd, 1979; Goldstein, 1978). But an expanded national role to meet the alleged failures seems unlikely, given the resistance to some of these past programs, the limited if any evidence that the public sees external governments as a remedy, and the divided advice from specialists on what effectively can deal with the problems.

Absent these extreme situations, it is difficult to see in either the first or last half of this decade crisis-generated national legislation. In making this judgment, there is an assumption that a "crisis" is not self-defining, but rather is a matter of full agreement that it is a crisis. A major earthquake in San Francisco would indeed stimulate considerable assistance from Washington; in this case, all would agree that the damage to lives and property exceeded that city's capacities, probably the state's, and hence called for national assistance. But is there a "racial crisis," an "energy crisis," an "urban crisis"? Here there exists much more disagreement as to the nature, scope, and remedy of a "problem" -- itself a

debatable term. The crucial difference is the degree of agreement among participants in the policy process. A true crisis is widely perceived as indiscriminant in its ill effects, incapable of local or state handling, and calling for immediate action.

In such terms, it is difficult to detect in emerging social trends an educational crisis possessing these crystallizing elements. Possibly,unless checked, the increasing failure of LEA voters to support bond, tax levy, and school budget referenda could eviscerate the local financial basis of many schools. But note that where this has occurred most severely, the state has been available to provide more funds. If this goes on, we might see a movement for a greater share of local costs from the state in the regions with the most depressed economies. When Proposition 13 passed in California, that state moved within one year from providing 44 percent to 70 percent of LEA costs. The tax-expenditure and limitation movement among the states, as Piele points out, may well have slowed in the last year, possibly as citizens realize that cuts will come not only in welfare but in public safety and other desired programs. But the movement has increased in Washington with the advent of the Reagan administration.

However, if such a crisis were to emerge -- from the baby boomlet, the Northeast's big-city school problems, poor instruction, or tight school financing -- what would be Washington's role? There should be great resistance by policy makers to rushing to meet the issues, mindful of the problems attendant on haste in the last two decades of national policy. That history would also work in favor of categorical programs in these four cases. Because the needs generating these crises are quite different, they would foster, if

not be stimulated by, functional interest groups, such as attended the compensatory and handicapped programs. For Congress, it would be easier to appropriate funds for special uses in each case. Moreover, as noted earlier, general aid grants, without formulas or guidelines, end up not meeting national goals, while categorical grants, despite their slippage, do get more money on target and report better results (Shapiro, 1980; San Francisco Chronicle, 1981; Hastings, 1981).

But the central finding of this speculation about an expansive alternative future is that the dynamic needed to create it -- a systemic crisis -- is not visible in 1981. Given possible crises, which primarily need larger funds, Washington's response would most likely be to give categorical grants to relieve special problems. A major exception to the lack of a Washington role in a contraction period is the judicial potential. That group can open up new areas for Washington, say, in a newly-appointed Supreme Court that overturns the Rodriquez decision. But then, the court is always the wild card in national policy making.

The Contracting Alternative Future

An educational policy world in which Washington heavily cuts its controls and funds is the future most frequently discussed today. Guthrie, Peterson, and Piele have each laid out its dimensions. These speculations also fit the comments of Washington observers: a new President desiring to dismantle the Department of Education and block Washington's "interference" with local governance; the June 1981 budget cuts, including dropping even the popular federal impact and Headstart aid programs (later reinstated); polls abounding on the public's disenchantment with schools and their results, and so on. This is a time of "gloom and doom" for supporters of Washington's

role in American education.

What would be the consequences for those contextual influences upon education policy set out earlier if this alternative future becomes a reality? Parental demand for schooling would be unaffected, as Piele suggests, because there is probably little widespread public awareness of exactly what Washington does in one's own school. Special focus groups would be distressed at the loss of Washington in getting their interests realized in traditional schools. But as noted, they could turn their attention more to the state scene in order to maintain their share of allocations under a block grant condition (Murphy, forthcoming). Traditional groups, as Guthrie has noted, may feel this contraction would enable their voices to be heard once again. Too, as noted, their lobbies would likely concentrate even more on the state agencies, and it is possible that teacher groups would move in some places to state-wide bargaining.

The dimensions of this contracting future suggest a shift to a greatly strengthened <u>state</u> politics of education, as explained earlier. Nationwide interests historically shift to the political arena where they can be best accommodated. When Blacks found their concerns for equality were ignored everywhere but the judiciary, they fought successfully in the courts. But when the Supreme Court now seems less supportive, they turn to other more supportive centers of political power -- increasingly hard to find, incidentally. If this shifting of the battle ground is repetitive in American policy history, it would likely appear once again in a contracting future. It is as if the American policy system were a set of hydraulic linkages, so that blockages of needs in one link diverts the pressure

to another. Given the immense needs that educational groups -- professional or lay-- currently reflect in the complex of programs, personnel, and objectives, that complex will not disappear because Washington shunts them away from the national level.

Washington's role under this contracting future could take a number of forms: nullifying legislation of the last two decades; cutting back national funding, much or little, while continuing that legislation; eliminating all but auditing controls on Washington funds for education; arguing in the Supreme Court against enforcement of national legislation, as with desegregation; directing bureaucracies not to oversee the states and LEAs in the administration of national programs; shaping the public perception of Washington's role by presidential statements in the media, and so on. All have emerged in the opening months of the Reagan administration.

Time is another consideration here, for so speedily has the administration moved that those affected seem to be powerless. But time must be also considered in other than the first year of a new administration. Historically, all recent presidents have lost popular support after their first half-year in office, and President Reagan is suffering that slippage at about the same time -- if not earlier -- as the others. Yet to be heard from are those groups affected by proposed contractions in this and other policy areas. Looking even further into the decade, if the contractions serve to generate a state-based politics that most participants adjust to because it meets most of their needs, then this future can become more stable. If, however, the contractions do not result in satisfaction by enough groups at the state level, there will be inescapable

pressure on Washington once again to expand its role. If that accompanies an electoral surge against the contraction philosophy, in this and other areas, there would be new leaders in Washington to read a new mandate to assist educational groups. In Peterson's two scenarios where the Democrats return to power in this decade, recall the NEA role of recent years in that party, which could once again stimulate an expanded Washington role.

The courts will play their uncertain function in this future also. There is little constitutional issue over Washington devolving its funds and controls to the states; what Congress has created, Congress can take away. However, there is another constitutional issue that is less certain, when laws are unfunded while the enabling legislation is untouched. Federal courts overwhelmingly rejected President Nixon's parallel effort to block programs he disliked by impounding their appropriations. What if a president fails to provide any appropriation request for laws he dislikes? What is the force of the Constitutional imperative laid on the Presidency in Article II (one of the few mandates on that office) that its occupant will "take care that the laws are faithfully executed"? In constitutional terms, the question is a ripe one, and groups deprived of their funds in this fashion will turn quickly to the courts to get an answer.

The Maintaining Alternative Future

It is a Newton-like law of social dynamics that programs set in motion tend to continue on course unless external force is applied. That is why there is a Law of Incrementalism, namely, mostly what will be is mostly what has been. Most policy changes in American history have been small, paralleling past programs, while major

changes have come from outside the incremental world of actors. So, an alternative future is one in which only minor changes occur from the present educational programs.

In this maintaining future, despite the current talk of devolution, much of what change occurs is symbolic, not substantive. That can occur if the forces seeking devolution find themselves blocked because: they did not really mean it in the first place; the method of achieving it got so complicated it could not be devised; the volume of pressures against it was strong from state-local agencies and private groups who preferred that the cup of authority should not pass to them; or other policy areas demanded prior attention and allies, not to be diverted by a less salient issue like education. In such cases, symbolic responses to situations by leaders who cannot alter their substance are a traditional political tactic in a world where one cannot win all the battles. To judge from previous administrations these symbolic responses might include: changing names of ongoing programs and claiming the change affects reality when it does not; reorganizing policy programs that one cannot alter in substance; introducing small programs in the direction desired with great publicity, either abandoning them later or letting them be amended to accommodate the existing policy system; accusing another branch of government or some pressure group of frustrating substantive change, campaigning against them for re-election, and so on.

The contexts which would point to the likelihood of a maintaining future include: the complex of special focus groups, including their allies among state-local school authorities, with a vested interest in program maintenance; the deepening financial

crisis in state and local budgets, for which Washington's cut in grants would be difficult to absorb in some regions, with no guarantee that even deeper cuts might not appear in subsequent years; the political liabilities which state agencies may accrue from the strain of allocating devolved block grants; the support that the Supreme Court has shown for the rights of beneficiaries of national programs; a more supportive public attitude about public schools if the economy improves or test scores drop no further; private sector substitutes for public schooling that are incapable of absorbing the demand for them or prove ineffective, and so on.

What would be Washington's role in educational policy in such a maintaining alternative future? In keeping with the Law of Incrementalism it would consist of lighthouse keeping, tinkering here or there with a bit more money or minor administrative change, including experimental devolution, like the revised ESEA Title IV discussed earlier. In such a future, a national program for purchasing or developing individualized instruction formats like the micro-processor technology discussed in the papers by Guthrie and Piele might have a special attraction to Washington. It could serve to test such developments, as it has other instructional materials, but more important it could help underwrite schools' purchase of them.

Note that the technology imposes no particular learning mode, subject matter, or moral lessons on a differentiated student body and school system. Given an array of such diverse computer materials to diverse LEAs, combinations could be selected and purchased which are amenable to each district's preferences in such educational matters. This technology is not unlike a blackboard; it thrusts no

particular information or value on the user, but rather can be employed for diverse educational practices and values. Therefore, a Washington advocating such technology is much different than one pushing MACOS or New Math curricula, or phonics or other reading pedagogies. The private sector benefit from such sales is another attraction, especially to conservatives. There may be a hint of this possibility in the recent report that the Army is contracting to private companies for electronic games which would teach tank and artillery gunners how to shoot. It would be cheaper, provide more practice, and be more attractive to soldiers who use the Space Invader games in their leisure. That futuristic note seems appropriate for closing this speculation on the possible tomorrows of education.

Conclusions

This paper has set out a pattern of historical givens, which must impinge upon future political trends, and, in turn, affect the role of Washington in education. These givens are a set of diffused ideas and practices -- the public's policy expectations, the rise of problems deemed amenable to governmental action, the escalation of local demands to state and national levels of government, the states' capacity building for education policy, and the states' detailed oversight of local schooling. Often interlinked, these diffusions politicized education over the last quarter-century, stemming from the crush of new pressure groups challenging the once dominant autonomy of the profession to define schooling policy. State and national branches of government were drawn into this fray and in time developed a vested interest in staying in it. Efforts by

Washington to devolve its role, via block grants and reduced controls, will therefore face a host of state and local groups, private and public, who would resist it. But there is considerable variation among the states in their degree of state control, economic vitality, and connectedness to Washington, which militates against any uniform reaction by the states.

These givens might be moderated by such considerations as: the state of the economy, mobilization of special interest groups, the general public's mood about schools, private sector capacities to absorb public school children, and the orientation of national government to expand or contract its role. Three logical alternative futures can be posed as to this Washington role -- expansion, contraction, or maintenance -- in each of which different forces were portrayed with different influences. The history of the dynamics of public institutions suggests that limited incremental change is the future most likely to be realized, because -- put dramatically -- the shock of major change is too painful for too many groups who are either opposed or neutral about changing.

So there is no "the" future at any moment of time, but rather possibilities and probabilities. Gauging the likelihood of these futures requires a sense of the mixing of influences in the past, of numerous political and social forces in the present, and of new events in the future. The last suggests a frame of mind that sees policy not set in concrete for all time. Rather, it alters, as the interplay of democratic politics swirls policy from the present to a future which shifts from the possible to certainty. There is little in the concepts or training of social science to enable scholars to do more than analyze the outer edges of this

matrix of historical and contemporary influences. We are excellent at postdictive analysis, fair on current analysis, but only amateurs on predictive analysis of public policy. We are certainly better than gypsy fortune-tellers, probably better than the Delphic oracles, but the best we can offer, as with these papers, is a reduction of the possibilities to a smaller number of probabilities. Beyond that, it is our hopes and fears that are being projected onto the analysis over a period as long as a decade. That is not unimportant, because of such emotions are dreams made, and from dreams the future is molded into a subsequent present.

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